

Access Advocacy



American
Foundation
for Suicide
Prevention

Dear Carla,

Welcome to AFSP's April 2025 Access Advocacy newsletter!

We're thrilled to share some exciting news: our office has a new name! After many impactful years as the AFSP Public Policy Office, we're now officially the **AFSP Policy and Advocacy Office!**

"This name change better reflects our work and the crucial role grassroots advocacy plays in advancing legislation and policy in pursuit of our mission" - **Robert Gebbia, AFSP Chief Executive Officer**

Along with this update, we've made some title changes and are thrilled to welcome new faces to our team! Check out the picture below to get to know the AFSP staff working alongside you.

Meet the Team:

advocacy@afsp.org



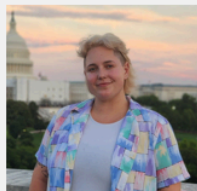
Laurel Stine
*Executive Vice President &
Chief Policy and Advocacy
Officer*



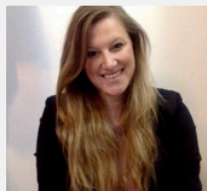
Nicole Gibson
*Senior Director of
State Policy & Advocacy*



Emily Feltren
*Senior Director of
Federal Policy & Advocacy*



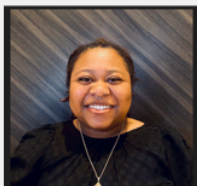
Erin Reda
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Bill White
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Monet Umama
*Manager of Advocacy
Events and Projects*



Alison Kwok
Manager of State Policy



Advocacy Highlights



On March 27, AFSP and the [National Council on Problem Gambling](#) partnered with the Bipartisan Senate Mental Health Caucus for a Congressional Briefing, ***Beyond the Bracket: Understanding The Impact of Gambling Addiction on Mental Health.***

AFSP's Senior Vice President of Research, Dr. Jill Harkavy-Friedman, joined experts to discuss how gambling addiction affects mental health, particularly among military service members. The widely-attended, Capitol Hill event was co-hosted by the Bipartisan Senate Mental Health Caucus.

With sports betting now legal in 38 states and \$121.1 billion wagered annually, problem gambling is an urgent and often overlooked mental health crisis.

Legislative Updates

Federal

Federal Funding & Appropriations

Big federal funding news from Capitol Hill! After many months of negotiations, Congress passed a full-year Continuing Resolution for Fiscal Year 2025, maintaining funding for critical suicide prevention programs—including 988, the Comprehensive Suicide Prevention Program (CSP), and the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)—at FY24 levels through September 30, 2025.

Looking ahead, the House and Senate are actively negotiating the Fiscal Year 2026 federal budget. Key funding decisions are on the table, including those affecting Medicaid and other vital programs.

In March, the CEO Alliance for Mental Health, which includes AFSP, issued a [statement](#) to express concerns about the impact cutting SAMHSA would have on people with mental health and substance use conditions. In April, 12 leading national mental health and substance use organizations released a [statement](#) following the announcement of [staffing cuts](#) at HHS.

On April 9, AFSP's CEO, Robert Gebbia, submitted powerful written testimony to the U.S. House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies. He advocated for sustained investment in life-saving programs, including:

- **\$530 million** for 988
- **\$38 million** for CSP
- **\$2.5 billion** for mental health research, inclusive of suicide prevention

“By investing in suicide prevention, we can save lives and make significant strides toward addressing this ongoing public health crisis,” Gebbia wrote.

Restructure of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is undergoing a significant [reorganization](#) that will impact many of the agencies dedicated to mental and behavioral health.

Starting soon, agencies like Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), and the National Institute for Occupational Safety

and Health (NIOSH) will merge into a newly established entity called the **Administration for a Healthy America (AHA)**. This restructuring also includes a substantial workforce reduction—from 82,000 to 62,000 full-time employees—which may affect several data surveillance and reporting programs.

Here's what we know so far of 988 and the Comprehensive Suicide Prevention Program:

- The **988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline** will transition to AHA.
- The **Comprehensive Suicide Prevention Program** will remain under the CDC.

AFSP is closely monitoring these developments to ensure the integrity of programs crucial to suicide prevention.

Your Voice Matters! AFSP continues to collaborate with lawmakers on both sides of the aisle to secure robust and sustainable funding for suicide prevention programs, research, and surveillance. Your advocacy is essential to these efforts!

📌 **Take Action Today:** Visit afsp.org/actioncenter to explore our latest action alerts and help amplify our mission to save lives. Together, we're making a difference!

State

AFSP chapters have hosted [37 Advocacy Action Day events](#) so far this year, with [more planned in April and May](#). These events are driving change and making a difference—thank you to all the advocates who planned, attended, and supported these impactful efforts!

Advocates across the country were unified in their messaging with a focus on some top policy priority areas, including (1) [Firearms and lethal means safety](#); (2) [Suicide prevention in K-12 schools](#); and (3) [988 and crisis services](#):

1) Firearms and Lethal Means Safety: Voluntary “Do-Not-Sell” Firearm Lists

- Advocates in [California](#), [Tennessee](#), [Kansas](#), and [Georgia](#) supported bills to create a voluntary “Do-Not-Sell List” within their state which would authorize individuals to temporarily restrict their own firearm purchases by adding their own names into the background check system to protect themselves against future impulsive firearm suicide attempts.

2) K-12 Schools: Youth Access to School-Based Mental Health Services

- Advocates in [Alabama](#), [New Hampshire](#), [South Dakota](#), and [Utah](#) opposed harmful legislation that would mandate parental consent for mental health or counseling services in schools, allow parents to restrict what school-based therapists can discuss with their students, and/or force personnel to “out” students, thus effectively allowing parents to deny students’ abilities to seek their own help for any mental health or suicide-related concerns and inhibiting schools’ ability to provide safe and affirming spaces for all students.

3) 988 & Crisis Services: 988 Telecom Surcharge

- Advocates in [Illinois](#), [New Hampshire](#), [North Dakota](#), and [Rhode Island](#) supported legislation to establish a 988 telecom surcharge which would create a permanent, sustainable funding mechanism for suicide prevention and mental health crisis response.

Curious about other legislation? Visit our [State Bills page](#) for updates on priority bills!

Keep the Momentum Going! State advocacy doesn't stop when sessions end! Here's how to stay active year-round:

- **Identify Champions:** Recognize lawmakers prioritizing mental health and suicide prevention.
- **Stay Informed:** Subscribe to legislators’ e-newsletters and follow them on social media.
- **Engage Locally:** Attend town halls and community events to share your insights.

- **Report Your Efforts:** Log your advocacy actions and legislative connections in the [AFSP Action Center](#).

💡 Find your state's website [here](#) to connect with local opportunities.

You Are the Experts! As our eyes and ears in the community, YOU know best what's needed to prevent suicide. By pairing your local expertise with AFSP's policy priorities, you can be a powerful advocate for change. Collaborate with your chapter to guide lawmakers in creating life-saving policies.

Resources to Help You Lead:

- [Priority Pillars](#)
- [Advocacy Resources Page](#)
- [State Fact Sheets & State Laws](#)
- [Find Your Elected Officials!](#)

Policy Resources

A brief from The Pew Charitable Trusts and the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

March 2025



State Policy Can Improve Suicide Prevention in Health Care Settings

Promising policies highlighted in 4 U.S. states

New Research: State Policy Can Improve Suicide Prevention in Health Care Settings

A [new publication](#) from AFSP and The Pew Charitable Trusts highlights three promising state policies that can influence suicide prevention in health care settings. Led by AFSP's Dr. Corbin J. Standley, Senior Director of Impact Communication and Continuous Improvement, and Nicole Gibson, Senior Director of State Policy and Advocacy, with support from the AFSP Policy & Advocacy and Impact Measurement teams, this issue brief highlights the impact of healthcare provider training, primary care integration, and mental health parity on suicide prevention. The brief also provides powerful examples of successful policy implementation in Colorado, Montana, Oregon, and Vermont.

Read and share the issue brief [here](#)!

Chapter Advocacy Spotlight

This February, we were deeply moved by the [AFSP Oregon Chapter's](#) remarkable efforts during their Advocacy Action Day. The event unfolded during a profoundly emotional time, as legislators were grappling after a colleague lost a loved one to suicide. During this time, Oregon advocates continued their strong advocacy, and exemplified incredible compassion and adaptability, ensuring their approach honored the moment's sensitivity.

Oregon's Governor Tina Kotek attended to thank our advocates personally, highlighting the importance of their work. Across 41 legislative meetings, our volunteers prioritized offering resources, support, and hope. Legislators and staff shared how much they appreciated this empathetic approach, emphasizing how our advocates created a space for healing while still delivering AFSP's lifesaving message.

This day was a powerful reminder of the unique impact AFSP's mission has in moments of both hope and grief. To all who participated—thank you for embodying the values of care, community, and resilience. Your work is making a difference. ❤️



The AFSP Oregon Chapter meets with Oregon Governor Tina Kotek during the Oregon Advocacy Action Day.

AFSP Advocacy in the News

National:
[Trevor Project: Trump Administration Proposes Defunding Suicide Lifeline for LGBTQ+ Youth Beginning October 2025](#)

Colorado:
[Colorado Suicide Prevention Advocacy Day Event to Be Held at Colorado State Capitol](#)

Virginia:
[Va. chapter of American Foundation for Suicide Prevention nationally recognized](#)

Florida:
[More than 100 providers gathered in Tallahassee for Behavioral Health Day](#)

Oregon:
[Washington County celebrates local community work and public health success stories in 22nd annual Public Health Awards](#)

Indiana:
[A Call for Comfort Brought the Police Instead. Now the Solution Is in Danger.](#)

Advocacy Tips

Share your Story to Protect Medicaid!

Your voice can make a difference! Congressional leaders are currently debating potential [drastic cuts to Medicaid](#), and we need your help now to protect this vital health care program.

Medicaid is a critical safety-net program and as the largest provider of health care for individuals with mental health conditions, helps ensure life-saving access to and coverage for mental health and substance use treatment.

If Medicaid has made a difference in your life or the lives of people you care about, we invite you to share your story by clicking the "Share Your Story" button below:

Share Your Story

What to know: Your story and any information you share in it may be featured in our advocacy initiatives, including outreach to policymakers, awareness campaigns, or media projects. We'll only share your first name, last initial, and state to maintain your privacy. You might also be contacted for clarification or additional details to strengthen your story's impact.



☀️ May is Mental Health Month! ☀️

May 22 – Congressional Briefing on Youth Suicide Prevention

On May 22, AFSP and the National Alliance on Mental Illness will host a Congressional Briefing on *Preventing Youth Suicide through Early Intervention*.

This important event will educate congressional staff and interested parties on addressing risk factors, connecting youth to mental health care and substance use treatment, and building a stronger crisis response framework in the U.S.

Stay tuned for updates on this briefing and other impactful advocacy programming happening throughout May!

With Hope,

Your AFSP Policy & Advocacy Team

Laurel Stine, Executive Vice President & Chief Policy & Advocacy Officer

Nicole Gibson, Senior Director of State Policy & Advocacy

Emily Feltren, Senior Director of Federal Policy & Advocacy

Taylor Kleffel, Senior Manager of State Policy

Bill White, Senior Manager of Federal Policy

Alison Kwok, Manager of State Policy

Erin Reda, *Manager of Advocacy Engagement & Operations*
Monet Umana, *Manager of Advocacy Events & Projects*

Are you working with your AFSP Chapter and making headlines? Let us know! Email your work to advocacy@afsp.org to potentially be featured in our next newsletter.

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